

**JOINT HEARING OF THE SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE AND THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE**

“EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO SNOW STORM JONAS”

FEBRUARY 16, 2016

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD D. FLINN, JR., DIRECTOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Costa, Chairman Rafferty, Chairman Wozniak and members of the Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness and Transportation Committee, I am Rick Flinn, Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss our agency's preparedness and coordination activities leading up to and during Winter Storm Jonas.

The mission of PEMA is to save lives, reduce suffering, and protect property and the environment by coordinating Commonwealth agencies and resources to prevent, protect, prepare, respond and recover from any man-made or natural disaster. PEMA's primary role is to coordinate state agency response and to support county and local governments in the areas of preparedness, planning, response, and recovery for any disaster or emergencies. As a matter of common practice, PEMA and state agency partners undertake activities to aggressively prepare for any event. By state government standards, PEMA is a small organization but our mission is statewide, involving all 67 counties and impacting every resident.

As part of its normal routine, PEMA conducts daily operations briefs whereby the State Meteorologist provides weather briefings. All state agency Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLOs) are invited to participate in those daily operation briefs and the state meteorologist's weather slides are shared on a daily basis with all state agencies. On January 17, it was clear that there was a potential for a Friday through Saturday storm (January 22-23) that could impact the Commonwealth with significant snow fall. This is when PEMA's preparedness activities for the storm began. In addition to the daily operations briefs, multiple weather coordination calls were conducted by PEMA

throughout the course of that week to ensure situation awareness to state agencies and local governments.

In advance of the storm and multiple times per day, PEMA provided the storm's projections to all state agencies and local governments. The forecasts provided the snow probability and identified areas that faced the highest potential for snow fall. These forecasts showed the potential for 12-18"+ of snow along the Pennsylvania Turnpike corridor, but caveated those amounts by indicating that actual snow fall totals were susceptible to significant variations from the forecast based upon the final path of the storm.

As the confidence in the storm continued to solidify and the storm watches and warnings began to issue, the Governor signed a proclamation of disaster emergency in advance of the storm to enable state agencies to use all available resources as necessary to cope with the storm. Beginning on Thursday, January 21, the Governor hosted the first of several multiple agency press conferences at PEMA whereby citizens were alerted to the impending storm and potential for hazardous and rapidly declining road conditions. On Friday, January 22, the State Emergency Operations Center was activated.

The activation of the State Emergency Operations Center brings together liaisons from all state agencies and organizes the liaisons into Emergency Support Functions pursuant to the Commonwealth's Emergency Operations Plan. The state agencies that comprise the Emergency Support Functions are provided a common operating picture for any event. Activities and resource requests are coordinated by the State Emergency Operations Center while the command of the incident response is directed by the incident commander at the scene of the incident.

During this activation, over 46 state, federal, local, and private entities assisted with the response during the course of the storm. This multiple agency response was coordinated by PEMA and included our state partners: the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

The collective efforts of the Commonwealth provided direct assistance to county and local emergency management agencies and response operations in Bedford and Somerset counties. This assistance included: health and wellness checks of motorists by first responders; distribution of food, water, gasoline to motorists in their vehicles and at shelters; identification and operation of warming shelters for motorists; procurement of charter busses to transport individuals from the Turnpike to the shelters and then back to their vehicles the following morning; and the coordination of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation assets to ensure that alternate routes would be cleared once the backlog was relieved.

While the Emergency Operations Center coordinated the specific assistance requested, multiple press events and releases issued throughout the course of the weekend event advising motorists to remain off the roads and emphasizing that travel was impossible in some areas. Throughout the duration of the incident, senior cabinet officials involved in the response efforts and county representatives participated in scheduled conference calls to ensure situation awareness.

This storm was historic in nature challenging even the most seasoned first responders. While we acknowledge the uncomfortable conditions that motorists were faced with, we are proud of the response efforts of the Commonwealth and local partners. All of the agencies involved worked until the mission was completed and every last vehicle was removed from the roadway.

PEMA regularly reviews its protocols and activities which it undertakes during an incident, and we will continue to assess and identify those areas where improvements can be implemented. Regardless of the situation, the priority and guiding principle of PEMA's actions is the safety of Pennsylvania's residents and visitors.

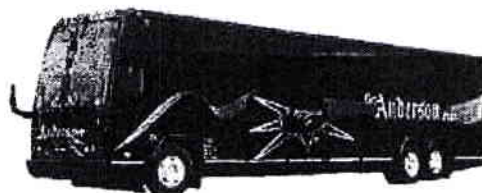
Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Anderson COACH & TRAVEL



February 1, 2016

Anderson Coach & Travel
One Anderson Plaza
Greenville, PA 16125



Dear Rescue Crew and First Responders,

On behalf of the Anderson family, our staff and passengers, we thank you for your hard work and thoughtfulness during the rescue efforts of the Pennsylvania Turnpike shutdown on January 22-23, 2016.

Our company had 13 motorcoaches stuck on the highway for more than 24 hours as charter groups were returning from the March for Life in Washington, D.C. We were in constant contact with our drivers while on the road and they spoke very highly of rescue workers who tended to the stranded.

We know how hard your job is and realize that the winter storm only complicates matters. We truly appreciate each individual in your organization and their dedication to helping others, even when it could mean their own safety is in jeopardy.

For your diligent work to clear the feet of snow, we thank you. For the huge task of getting hundreds of vehicles moving again, we thank you. For your offers of water and food, gasoline, diapers, reassuring words, etc., we thank you. For your input in planning an alternate route, we thank you. For coordination between the local responders and the National Guard, we thank you. For going back out and doing it all again when called upon, we thank you.

Sincerely,

Doug Anderson

Doug Anderson
President
Anderson Coach & Travel

Sue Anderson Nicklin

Sue Anderson Nicklin
Vice President
Anderson Coach & Travel

Flinn, Richard

From: Carrelli, Anthony J Brig Gen USAF 193 SOW (US)
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2016 6:48 PM
To: Smith, Mark (GOV)
Cc: Flinn, Richard; Blocker, Tyree; Richards, Leslie; Brown, Marcus L;
Subject: FW: PAARNG thank you message

Just wanted to share as this was posted on our DMVA website. Directed at the National Guard, but we were just a piece. Team Pennsylvania made it work, enjoy the weekend.

TC

ANTHONY J. CARRELLI, Brig Gen, PaANG
Acting Adjutant General

From: Eileen Costello [Caution-mailto:lakecostello@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 3:01 PM
To: MV,PublicAffairs
Subject: PA Army National Guard thank you

Dear Pennsylvania Army National Guard,

Traveling west bound on the PA Turnpike this past Friday evening, Jan 22, our 3 buses heading back home to Green Bay, Wisconsin, halted for 22 hours in one place just west of New Baltimore, approx 2.7miles from the Allegheny Tunnel. This group included 150 high school students and along with the students and chaperones, we wish to say a hearty and cheesy thank you to the PA National Guard! The Guard members were so professional, competent, kind and thoughtful to our bus drivers and students. The Guard quickly assessed the situation, made a plan and soon we were extracted from our snow bound lanes and able to continue our journey home. They even brought us some food and our entire group as well as our parents and the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay wishes to again say thank you and let you know how much we appreciated all of your efforts! If we can ever be of assistance to you in Wisconsin, we are ready and so happy to serve you too!

Sincerely,
Eileen Costello
Green Bay Catholic Diocese March For Life chaperone Green Bay, WI

Sent from my iPad

Pa. companies provided meals to travelers who were moved to a shelter after turnpike closing: PennLive letters



By **Letters to the Editor**

on February 07, 2016 at 1:00 PM, updated February 07, 2016 at 1:02 PM

Winter Storm Jonas packed a powerful punch over the weekend, dumping more than two feet of snow over the Commonwealth and neighboring states. Pennsylvania food retailers worked hard to make sure the shelves were stocked with plenty of bread, eggs and milk, and gasoline retailers kept the fuel flowing to power automobiles, tractors, generators and snow blowers.

On Saturday, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) reached out to the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association to ask our members' assistance in providing meals to travelers who were moved to an emergency shelter after the turnpike was closed between Brezewood and New Stanton.

Sheetz and Sunoco readily answered PEMA's call. Employees at Sheetz' Bedford store, located off the Pennsylvania turnpike entrance/exit, made 250 subs and provided water to the stranded motorists. Associates at Sunoco A-Plus convenience stores in South Somerset and North Bedford prepared 100 sandwiches and donated several hundred bottles of water to the people stuck on the turnpike.

We offer our sincere thanks to Sheetz and Sunoco for providing those travelers with a little comfort and a meal as they waited out the storm.

More than 500 cars, trucks and buses were stranded from late Friday through Saturday. Thanks to assistance from PennDOT, the National Guard and law enforcement, no one was seriously injured.

As we shovel the snow off our cars, driveways and walk ways and get back to normal, we feel fortunate to be able to count on Pennsylvania's food retailers to assist their communities in times of need.

DAVID L. MCCORKLE, president & CEO, The Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association, Wormleysburg.



Nominating petitions should only be used for the purpose of nominating candidates: PennLive letters

Bernie Sanders' supporters have this one thing in common with Trump supporters but, probably only one: Pennlive letters

Sometimes conservative values should be relaxed for the greater good: PennLive letters

Who really was to blame for the traffic backup on the turnpike: PennLive letters

Too much regulation discourages drilling for natural gas: PennLive letters

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